

USDA, NRCS
PLANT MATERIALS
PROGRAM

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OF
INTEREST

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PMC
STAFF

Randy King,
Manager

Lance Tharel,
Assistant Manager

Dale Goff,
Bio. Science Tech.

Eddie Pratt,
Bio. Science Tech.

Debbie Orick,
Secretary

USDA , NRCS
6883 S State Hwy 23
Booneville, AR 72927
Ph: 479-675-5182
Fax: 479-675-5466

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Hampton Big Bluestem Release

On October 9, 2007 at a surprise luncheon for the release of a new big bluestem germplasm was announced by the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Booneville Plant Materials Center staff. The germplasm was named Hampton, in honor of Mr. Jeral Hampton.

Mr. Hampton is very active in the community of Booneville. He, along with a committee of five community leaders was very instrumental in the development of the Dale Bumpers Small Farm Research Center.

State Conservationist, Kalven Trice praised the USDA Committee members and the importance of the Dale Bumpers Small Research Center to the community and the surrounding three state area.

Manager of the Plant Materials Center, Randy King, unveiled the poster announcing the Hampton big bluestem release. Mr. Hampton was speechless for a moment then praised the hard work and dedication of the USDA Committee and employees of the Center for making his job easier.

There were about forty-five people present for the event. Staffs from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Plant Materials Center, and the Agricultural Research Center along with friends and family of Mr. Hampton were there to celebrate the special occasion. The germplasm will be grown commercially by Ernst Conservation Seeds.



Mr. Jeral Hampton speaking after the un-veiling of the Hampton big bluestem grass

Story continued on next page!

Mission Statement of NRCS

The mission of the Natural Resources Conservation (NRCS) Plant Materials Program (PM) is to develop, test, and transfer effective state-of-the-art plant science technology to meet customer and resource needs. NRCS PM activities are consistent with the objectives of the current United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and NRCS Strategic Plans (Exhibit 539-1), namely to provide timely and effective vegetative solutions for identified resource needs.

Big bluestem is a perennial warm season grass native to North America. Mature foliage heights range from 3 to 8 feet tall. Foliage is bluish green in color. A mature plant has a reddish cast after frost. Flowers are produced from late-June to August, with maximum seed production generally occurring in mid-August

Hampton germplasm is recommended primarily for livestock, forage production and wildlife habitat. It is best used as a seasonal hay crop. The abundant, leafy forage is palatable to all classes of livestock. It can be utilized in grazing situations if appropriate grazing management techniques are applied (rotational grazing) to prevent damage to the plant community and stand population. Hampton germplasm may also be used for many types of conservation plantings, such as plant buffers and vegetative barriers. The extensive root system penetrates deeply which makes it ideal for holding solid particles and the prevention of erosion.

For more information about Hampton big bluestem please feel free to contact the Booneville Plant Materials Center at (479) 675-5182.

King Speaks at the Clinton Library

By invitation from Director, Don Richardson with the Arkansas Climate Awareness Project, James R. King (Randy) manager of the Booneville Plant Materials Center was invited to speak at the William J. Clinton Presidential Library in Little Rock, Arkansas on Friday, August 17, 2007.

King spoke on the potential use of switchgrass as a renewable source of cellulosic ethanol. The Booneville PMC has been working with the Department of Energy along with Oklahoma State University for the past 10 years in an effort to develop strategies that will enhance the dry matter production of several switchgrass cultivars. The center is currently conducting a study to measure the increased dry matter yields of ‘Alamo’, and ‘Cave in rock’ using various rates of poultry litter, and various rates of irrigation water.



PMC Manager, James R. King speaking at the Clinton Library



**HAPPY
THANKSGIVING**

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